



Freeway's proximity to schools stirs worry

Kerry Fehr-Snyder

The Arizona Republic

Aug. 19, 2007 12:00 AM

There are concerns about the long-term health impacts on students at more than half a dozen schools within a half mile of the proposed South Mountain Freeway route along Pecos Road.

"That is a big concern to me because I don't think it's healthy for our kids," said Rae Waters, a member of the Kyrene School District Governing Board. "I just think it's a safety issue for our kids."

More than 3,600 students attend five Kyrene elementary and middle schools just north of the proposed freeway route. An additional 1,485 students attend Horizon Community Learning Center, and almost 2,900 students attend Desert Vista High School. Kyrene de los Lagos' lot line comes within 70 feet of where the freeway would run.

Neither the Kyrene school board nor the district's administration has taken a position on the freeway.

But the district is looking at legal action to force the Arizona Department of Transportation to build a wall or implement other "mitigation measures" to protect schoolchildren, district spokeswoman Kelly Walton said.

ADOT is preparing a draft environmental-impact statement that will cover air quality and other impacts expected from the 22-mile, 10-lane freeway.

ADOT spokesman Doug Nintzel did point out that land-use planning decisions made by the school districts and Phoenix are responsible for the close proximity of the schools to the freeway. All seven schools were planned and built years after voters approved a half-cent sales tax for freeways in 1985 and the State Transportation Board chose the Pecos Road alignment in 1988.

"In a perfect world, there wouldn't be any schools or homes near freeways, but ADOT doesn't make those land-use decisions," Nintzel said.

Earlier this year, the medical journal the *Lancet* published the results of a 13-year study showing that the closer children live to busy highways, the greater risk they face in developing respiratory problems for the rest of their lives.

That risk extends to schools, said Jim Gauderman, the study's lead author and an epidemiologist at the University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine.

"There's certainly a lot of emerging work that traffic exposure has health effects on children," Gauderman said.

The study followed 3,600 children ages 10 to 18 in 12 Southern California communities and found that children living near freeways suffered about the same damage as those living in communities with the highest levels of pollution.

The culprit appears to be the ultra-fine particles from automobile exhausts that get into the small airways of the lung, the

study found. Researchers found that children who lived within 500 yards of a freeway had a 7 percent deficiency in the rate of air they could exhale.

Gauderman said research also indicates there appears to be long-term effects to children's cardiovascular and neurological health, although he said more studies are needed.

The researchers recently received a grant from the National Institutes of Health, which funded the initial study, to determine which specific pollutants have the biggest effect on children's health.

Offsetting those effects at schools is difficult, Gauderman said, unless administrators install special air filters, plant trees nearby and keep schoolchildren indoors, away from the particulates. The last tactic is virtually impossible if kids want to enjoy outdoor recess and sports.

"That's the kind of thing we worry about more often," Gauderman said. "Whatever is in that ambient air is a risk for children who are playing and exercising. We do worry about sports fields right by major roads, for sure."

What do you think?

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- publisher2001
- Posted: Aug 18, 2007 at 11:10 PM
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Ban All Motor driven units, Get a Horse. For Gods sake never ever make the Motoring crew clean up thier gas guzzling autos. They will not press for better schools so they don't care if the kids get sick, right? Only in AZ!!

- snipercat
- Posted: Aug 18, 2007 at 11:39 PM
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man just ban cars and ride bikes there problem solved

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Chandler Blvd puts out more pollution than that freeway will. So do major streets that hundreds of schools sit on.

- [azbaja](#) | [Profile](#)
- Posted: Aug 19, 2007 at 1:40 AM
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What a crock most every thing here is with in a half mile of a major road or free way. South PHX is just full of people that like to live in dream world.

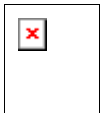
- [Bobby4449 | Profile](#)
- Posted: Aug 19, 2007 at 1:42 AM
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Just another political "spinjob" by the Arizona Repugnant, trying to use the "children" card to keep them from building the 202. Don't let it be forgotten that the Repugnant was the main leader in keeping I-10 from being built through Phoenix until the 1990, with constant "spin" articles to get the public to not support any freeway construction.

We obviously see the traffic mess that Phoenix is in, mostly because most of the freeway's in Phoenix were built 20 years too late thanks to the political hackjob pushed by the Repugnant.

I for one am getting sick and tired of hearing about these whiny little snobs in Ahwatukee complaining about the 202, when THEY were the ones who moved in next to the proposed path to begin with! Last I checked, none of those houses were there when they finalized the route of the 202, so all these people need to just shut it and stop wanting everyone else to bow down and kiss their feet.

- Wonderwhy
- Posted: Aug 19, 2007 at 6:13 AM
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A community that rests against a mountain on it's north side and is open to the thousands of square miles of blowing dirt on it's south side which contains spores of valley fever and anthrax is worried about the effects of a freeway close to local schools? Do the kids who attend these schools commute from San

Diego? I don't think so. I'm guessing the students live in close proximity to the schools in question and are affected by the local environment whether they attend local schools or not. This is just a desperate attempt to invent some issue to stop the South Mountain loop. It's freeways that make it realistic to live behind South Mountain. Your not kidding anybody.

- [Michael9218 | Profile](#)
- Posted: Aug 19, 2007 at 6:27 AM
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Nice comments, Wonderwhy. Let's not forget the root of the whole problem here, however...knowing where the route of the SM freeway was all along, those homes should NEVER have been built in the first place.

- [Michelle6463 | Profile](#)
- Posted: Aug 19, 2007 at 6:42 AM
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Geez! As a mother of a child with severe asthma, I'm here to tell you that it's not just the freeways doing this. It's every major road in the Valley! There's so much pollution here, that simply moving the schools or building a wall isn't going to cut it. What we should really be doing is pressuring the automobile industry to find a cleaner way to fuel our cars and busses! Let's cut the oil industry out all together, and we'd eliminate so many problems--including respiratory illness in our children. It's not just the freeways doing this, people!

- bacabob
- Posted: Aug 19, 2007 at 6:49 AM
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How does a wall help protect the children from the environment ?? As stated before also, cars idling on Chandler Blvd create more pollution than a freeway would. Let's get real. Note the study shows a 7% increase which in my book is within error of the data and therefore inconclusive. Too many variables to try and make an

'Arizona' connection.

- Pat0728
- Posted: Aug 19, 2007 at 7:57 AM
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Do any of these snobs in Ahwatukee know that they aren't the only people that live in this city. This proposal has been out since 1985, long before most of those homes were built. They should've done a better job researching the area they bought there houses in. This freeway will re-route a lot of out of town traffic making life for everyone who uses I-10 a lot easier.

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